

1897.

TO THE STOWMARKET URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to present to you my first Annual Report on the health of Stowmarket during the year 1897.

VITAL STATISTICS.

If the population of Stowmarket had increased since the Census of 1891, at the same rate as between 1881 and 1891, it would have been **4518** in the middle of 1897—and I have assumed that to be correct.

Birth Rate. The Birth rate **24.10** per 1000 living, is low compared with former years. The average of the preceding ten years being **26.33**—but it is about that of last year (**23.83**).
[See Table at end.]

Death Rate. The death rate was **14.16** per 1000, much higher than last year, which was 12.92; but it is below the average of the previous ten years (**14.58**).

Infant Mortality. The Infant Death rate, *i. e.*, the number of deaths under one year to 1000 Births, was **110.09**, compared with **93.40** last year.

Zymotic Death Rate. The Zymotic Death rate, *i. e.*, the Death rate from the seven principal Zymotic diseases (Diphtheria, Typhoid Fever, Measles, Whooping Cough, Diarrhœa, Scarlet Fever, and Small-pox) was very low, there being only **3 deaths**, compared with 2 last year.

Phthisis. There were **6 deaths**—Phthisis (compared with 4 last year) giving a Death rate of 1.3 per 1000, which is very low.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

34 notifications of Infectious diseases were received during the year, compared with 45, 117, and 35 for the three preceding years.

Scarlet Fever. There were **20** cases of Scarlet Fever reported. 5, or **25 per cent** were treated in the Isolation Hospital, which has only been in use since the eleventh of October. There were no deaths. Most of the cases were of a mild type, and as usual when this is the case, several of them were not recognized by the parents till the skin had begun to peel, and so the disease was spread.

As I have already pointed out to the Council, I do not consider the present means of disinfection in these cases adequate, and that too much faith is placed in mere fumigation. A steam disinfecting chamber must be provided.

After the Sanitary Inspector has fumigated each room in which the patient and nurse have been during the attack, the floors must be scrubbed with water containing a disinfectant (*e. g.*, a 2 per cent. solution of izal, which is non-poisonous).

All paintwork and furniture must be treated in the same way.

All useless and valueless articles must be burnt.

All clothing, sheets, &c., used, must be boiled. Bedding, blankets and clothes which cannot be boiled, must be disinfected by heat in the chamber.

Then the walls must be stripped, the paper burnt and the ceilings and walls lime-washed.

Until this is carried out in every case, the Isolation Hospital will be of little value in preventing the spread of the disease.

Diphtheria. There were **7 cases** of Diphtheria reported, compared with **3 last year** and **3 the year before**—none died. In all cases the drains were found to be defective and were remedied.

Typhoid
Fever.

There were **4 cases** of Typhoid Fever reported compared with **none in 1896** and **3 in 1895**. Two of the four cases were imported and one of these ended fatally.

In the other two the drinking water was found to be polluted with sewage and the wells were closed by order of your Council.

Wells.

With reference to the Drinking Water of Stowmarket, I wish to call your special attention to the state of the wells.

I have now had an opportunity of examining several of them, and without exception have found them polluted with sewage and had to advise you to have them closed, including the public pump in the Market-place.

This, as you are aware, is a very serious matter, and I recommend the Council at an early date, to consider the advisability of having all the wells examined and closing all those of a suspicious nature. The reason of this pollution of the water is obvious.

Stowmarket is built on gravel and sand overlaying clay. The rain water falling on the surface sinks rapidly through the gravel till it reaches the clay, where the springs are formed which supply the wells.

Vaults (so large that they are only cleaned out once or twice a year), Cesspits (many of which are never cleaned out till they run over) and many old drains (constructed of local pipes) are all over the town. These vaults, cesspits and drains are all more or less leaky, so that the gravel round them is saturated with sewage matter. The rain will therefore wash down, more or less, of this sewage matter into the wells.

In gravel and sand, wells should not be within 160 to 200 feet of any cesspit or drain.

I fear no well in Stowmarket is so far away from a possible source of pollution, and many of them are side by side.

The mere fact that the water is clear and tasteless is no criterion of its purity, as I have so often pointed out. Bacilli of Typhoid or Cholera added to a glass of pure water, by thousands, would not be appreciable to sight or taste.

If one of our cases of Typhoid happen to pollute a well, the effects might be appalling, and that without altering the appearance of the water.

Some years past, at Terling in Essex, this very thing occurred, and out of a population of 900, 200 were attacked in two months. There the wells were exactly in the same condition as here. Towards the end of a dry season a case of Typhoid was imported. Three weeks later and after a heavy fall of rain, the disease broke out with alarming violence.

Dr. Thresh (the M. O. H. for Essex) makes the following remarks in reference to this outbreak.

“In the filth-sodden soil the Typhoid bacillus had probably found a suitable nidus for its rapid multiplication. Thus a heavy rainfall would not only wash impurities into the wells from the surface, but wash the organisms out of the soil into the rising ground water which supplied the wells.”

You have under discussion an improved Sewerage Scheme, which will undoubtedly help to purify the air, and if you give the people what is equally important with pure air to breathe, pure water to drink, I believe Stowmarket will be one of the healthiest towns in England.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

(Signed)

CHAS. W. LOW, D. P. H.

Birth-Rate,
all England, 1896,
29.7.

Death-Rate,
all England, 1896,
17.1.

Date.	Estimated Population to Middle of year.	Birth Rate.	Death-Rate.
1887	4231	28.83	12.99
1888	4260	26.29	14.31
1889	4288	29.61	12.36
1890	4317	28.49	18.29
1891	4346	28.76	12.88
1892	4374	24.23	16.68
1893	4404	22.47	20.20
1894	4432	26.39	11.95
1895	4460	24.43	13.22
1896	4489	23.83	12.92
1897	4518	24.10	14.16

